

First breeding record for Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* in Libya

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Première donnée sur la nidification du Blongios nain *Ixobrychus minutus* en Libye. Aux printemps 2008 et 2010, des Blongios nains *Ixobrychus minutus* ont été observés avec des nids contenant des œufs dans les régions de Cyrénaïque et Tripolitaine de Libye. Ce sont les premières données de nidification en Libye, et le Blongios nain niche peut être régulièrement dans les habitats aquatiques du pays.

In North Africa, the Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* is known to breed in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt, although data are scanty due to the difficulty of establishing reliable evidence (Goodman & Meininger 1989, Isenmann & Moali 2000, Thévenot *et al.* 2003, Isenmann *et al.* 2005). To date, there have been no breeding records in Libya. According to Bundy (1976) the species is frequently observed in Tripolitania in March–May and less frequently in August–October. Most sightings are in coastal wadis. In Cyrenaica it occurs infrequently in the coastal region in April–May. In Fezzan only occasional

sightings are available. Additional spring records are mentioned by Brehme *et al.* (2002).

On 6 May 2010, while searching for Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus* ssp. nests in the Common Reed *Phragmites australis* beds of a lake south of Bu Tesira recreational park, north Benghazi (32°09'N 20°08'E; Figs. 1–2) (*cf.* Hering *et al.* 2010) we found a Little Bittern nest in *c.*4 m-tall old reeds on the west shore (Figs. 3–4). The 'clumsily' built nest, located *c.*1 m above water level in the layer of bent reeds, contained four eggs still warm from brooding. The nest was *c.*2 m from open water and 3 m from the stony, bare



Figures 1–2. Breeding site of Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*: lake lined with reeds south of Bu Tesira recreational park, Benghazi, Cyrenaica, Libya, 30 April 2010 (J. Hering)

Site de nidification du Blongios nain *Ixobrychus minutus* : un lac bordé de roseaux au sud du parc Bu Tesira, Benghazi, Cyrénaïque, Libye, 30 avril 2010 (J. Hering)

Figures 3–4. Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* nest in reeds at the lake south of Bu Tesira recreational park, Benghazi, Cyrenaica, Libya, 6 May 2010 (J. Hering)

Nid du Blongios nain *Ixobrychus minutus* dans des roseaux du lac au sud du parc Bu Tesira, Benghazi, Cyrénaïque, Libye, 6 mai 2010 (J. Hering)

Figure 5. Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* nest destroyed by predator at the lake south of Bu Tesira recreational park, Benghazi, Cyrenaica, Libya, 30 April 2010 (J. Hering)

Nid du Blongios nain *Ixobrychus minutus* détruit par de prédateur dans le lac au sud du parc Bu Tesira, Benghazi, Cyrénaïque, Libye, 30 avril 2010 (J. Hering)



Figure 6. Breeding records and recent spring sightings of Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* in Libya; the numbers correlate with the site numbers in Table 1.

Données sur la nidification et observations printanières récentes du Blongios nain *Ixobrychus minutus* en Libye ; les chiffres correspondent aux numéros des sites du Tableau 1.

shore of the lake. Measurements were: diameter 25 × 25 cm, height 14.5 cm and cup 2.5 cm. The nest material consisted exclusively of pieces of *Phragmites* reeds. An adult was seen in flight in the vicinity of the nest. A further nest with remnants

of predated eggs (probably three) was found on 30 April, c.30 m to the south (Fig. 5). This nest was also constructed in the layer of bent reeds, c.1.2 m above water level, in a belt of very dense reeds c.8 m wide at this point. The nest was 18.5 cm

Table 1. Records of Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* in spring 2008 and 2010 in Libya.
Tableau 1. Observations du Blongios nain *Ixobrychus minutus* aux printemps 2008 et 2010 en Libye.

No.	Date	Location	Number of birds and nests
1	26 May 2008	Lake in Bu Tesira recreational park, Cyrenaica	two males, four females; one probable nest
2	27 May 2008	Al Marj, Cyrenaica	two males
3	26 April 2010	Wadi Kaam, Tripolitania	four males, one female
4	26 April 2010	Wetland near Zlitan, Tripolitania	one male
5	27–28 April 2010	Various wetlands in Taurgha Oasis, Tripolitania	c.10 individuals
6	30 April 2010	Lake near sports club in southern Benghazi, Cyrenaica	two individuals
7	30 April–6 May 2010	Lake south of Bu Tesira recreational park, Cyrenaica	c.4–6 individuals; two nests
8	1–7 May 2010	<i>Phragmites</i> stands south of Benghazi, Cyrenaica	two individuals

in diameter and 18.0 cm high. On both days we observed 4–6 Little Bitterns along the east shore, which is c.200 m in length and fringed by reeds.

Little Bittern is probably a regular breeding bird in suitable habitat in Libya. In 2008 and 2010 we made a series of sightings during the species' North African breeding season that support this assumption (Table 1, Fig. 6). On 26 May 2009, we found an empty nest on the shore of Bu Tesira lake that probably was constructed by Little Bitterns (*cf.* Hering & Fuchs 2010). In addition to the locations listed in Table 1, potential breeding areas include the well-developed reedbeds of the western Benghazi lakes, as well as the wetlands near Al Oardah, Alt-Germa, Bergin, Hummayrah in Fezzan, Sabha sewage farm, the desert volcano Wau an Namus and the waste-water area south of Al Kufra Oasis (see Hering *et al.* 2009 for habitat details).

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